



United Women in Faith
El Camino Real District Newsletter

December - Q4 2023 Issue

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The *Mission Link* is a quarterly newsletter of El Camino Real District United Women in Faith.

Articles for Submission

Please direct items for publication in Mission Link to the [Communications Coordinator](#). If you provide photos of recognizable individuals, please be sure you have obtained permission from those individuals to publish their picture. The next issue will be published in March, 2024. The deadline for articles and photos to be submitted is March 15, 2024.

President's Message

I hope you are full of the Joy of Christmas! I have been privileged to attend several UWF events put on by our units. Gilroy had a lovely Christmas lunch (with a plethora of delicious soups) and a nice selection of items for sale on November 18th. I also attended the Christmas luncheon put on by San Jose First that was held at the Woodhaven event center of Willow Glen UMC. It is always great to get better acquainted with our membership. Three other events coming up: Willow Glen Ornament Exchange December 10th, Christmas event at Tongan First UMC on December 16th in Palo Alto and a Christmas event with St. Paul UWF unit on December 21st. They promise to be truly inspiring!

I also attended a SURJ event held at San Jose Christmas in the Park going on now. We collected signatures for the TRUST campaign that will be presented at the County Supervisors meeting on December 12th. The park is really nicely decorated with tons of decorated trees by a host of organizations with animated booths and lots of rides and food. It was a really fun event with entertainment from various school groups! Some pictures are below. If you want to be part of the Supervisors meeting, just let me know. It will be exciting.



Your District Team is busy planning for our next event so get ready! We are pivoting to Climate Change for 2024. The Connect and Learn Event will be held virtually on Zoom and will happen on February 3rd from 10 to noon so get that on your calendar. Our speaker will be from Interfaith Power and Light who will give us an overview of what they are doing to fight Climate Change and ideas on how you can be part of the solution. We are also planning some special music and another presentation about ways to reduce your energy bill in a fun way. Please come with your ideas to share!

As always, I welcome any ideas you may have for ways the District Team can be helpful to you and your units. We are powerful together and can make change happen in our communities and around the world for women, children and youth.

Debbie Ow
President
ECRD District United Women in Faith

Treasurer's Report

Thank you to all of the units that have sent in pledges! A link to the remittance form may be found at <https://elcaminorealumw.org/treasurer-information/>

The address for sending in remittances is still:

ECRD UMW, c/o Carolyn Bircher
1663 Martin Ave.
Sunnyvale, CA 94087

I plan to hold a Zoom training session for treasurers in January. If you didn't receive an email from me to confirm your email contact, please email me at treasurer@elcaminorealumw.org and let me know which unit you are treasurer for.

The offering received for Pajaro at the district celebration was \$1,050. Watsonville UMC will use it to purchase and distribute gift cards to those who lost their homes/businesses to the flood. Thank you to all who contributed.

Here is a summary of 2023 finances. The Pledge account is for contributions from the local units for missions, which are passed on to the conference (and then to National) UMW. The Administrative account is for the El Camino Real District UMW events and operations.

PLEDGE ACCOUNT

Pledges received (Oct-Nov)	\$ 2,695.00
Remittances sent to conference in Sept.	\$12,843.20
Interest received	\$ 0.13
Nov 30, 2023 balance	\$ 2,728.98

The total remittances sent to the conference in 2023 is \$41,857. This is our highest since before the pandemic. Keep up the good work!

ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNT

2023 Event expenses	\$ 2,110.56
2023 Communication expenses	\$ 607.40
2023 Admin. Expenses	\$ 80.07

2023 Sent to MEI & Gum Moon	\$ 200.00
Nov. 30, 2023 balance	\$ 3,114.58

If you have questions, please email treasurer@elcaminoalumw.org.

Carolyn Bircher
ECRD Treasurer

Book Club Opportunity

YOU'RE INVITED TO A BOOK CLUB – FIVE MEETINGS ONLY

Have you often thought you'd like to earn a United Women in Faith Reading Certificate? You can and it can be fun, too. The Almaden Hills UWF invites you to a book group on Zoom where we will read and discuss five books and page through the most recent "Response" magazines in order to earn our certificates. You'll make new friends along the way, as well. Our Zoom meetings will be on Fridays from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. These are the dates and the titles of the books we have chosen for our 2024 certificates –

- 1) February 23 – "Invisible Child" by Andrea Elliott
- 2) March 22 – "Lead From The Outside" by Stacey Abrams
- 3) April 26 – "World of Wonders" by Aimee Nezhukumatahil
- 4) May 24 – "Beating Guns: Hope For People Who Are Weary Of Violence" by Shaine Caliborne & Michael Martin
- 5) June 28 – "Braiding Sweetgrass" by Robin Wall Kimmerer

To get the Zoom link, email Bonnie Home – bonstance22@yahoo.com

Hearts Strangely Warmed

HEARTS STRANGELY WARMED
by Bonnie Home, Almaden Hills UWF

Have you attended a Zoom gathering of United Women in Faith recently? My guess is that you have! Let me tell you about just one of them that I joined on Tuesday, November 14. As Bishop Karen Oliveto of the Mountain Sky Conference was interviewed, I was among the 211 households watching across five time zones from Alaska to Maine. She came to talk about the study book she has written titled "Our Strangely Warmed Hearts."

Bishop Oliveto confessed that she has loved the church from the time she was 3 years old, attending the Sunday School at Babylon UMC in West Babylon on the Long Island shore. She laughed, "When your home town is named Babylon, how could you not be involved in church?" She and the other youth group members felt like odd balls and outcasts at school but were loved and accepted at church. That same youth group has just held its 40-year reunion and 50 youth group members came. They are still fast friends after all these years.

The bishop's mother grieved deeply when her daughter came out as gay. That news was not what she had envisioned for her child's future.

Bishop Oliveto wasn't sure she should accept the offer to become bishop because she didn't want to harm the church in any way. But her wife Robin told her, "Perfect love casts out all fear." The vote to elect her as bishop was 88 to zero.

She has received death threats for years, but for the past 18 months she has had a body guard. Untruths are published about her. One newspaper wrongly said that she reads tarot cards to predict the future. She does not. She reminded us that Jesus said more about divorce than he did about homosexuality. God created binaries and opposites such as "night and day" and "sea and dry land." But God also created gray and blended areas such as "dawn and dusk," and marshlands that combine water and land.

The pastors in Bishop Oliveto's Mountain Sky Conference may not think the way she does but she encourages them to be the very best pastors that they can be.

The bishop knows of a church that was proud of being a Reconciling Congregation. But then its people suddenly realized that their building was not accessible and had no sound system which made it hard to enter and hard to hear. So not everyone was welcome after all. She knows of another tiny church where 12 languages were spoken. The worship service now includes those languages in the liturgy.

We want our churches to be welcoming, but be aware that gay people will assume they are not welcome unless they see a sign on the **outside** of the building that indicates specifically that they are welcome. Queer youth have fallen weeping into Bishop Oliveto's arms after learning who she is and how she supports them.

At their ordination, pastors are asked, "Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?" Bishop Oliveto gets her joy from the Holy Spirit, her calm from breath prayers, her support from her Covenant group who hold one another accountable, and her rest and relief at her retreat home in Nova Scotia.

Bishop Oliveto's wife Robin is a nurse anesthetist and a deaconess. Both women are so busy that Robin has asked the bishop not to write another book until she retires! So we need to enjoy her newest book now.

Human Rights Seminar by Korean United Methodist Women

The National Network of Korean United Methodist Women (NNKUMW) held a *Human Rights Seminar* from 9/11/23 to 9/14/2023 in Atlanta, Georgia. Twenty-seven Korean UMW members attended. In preparation for the seminar, we focused on the following Bible verse from Galatians 3:28:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave no free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

We divided ourselves into small groups in advance, in order to study the materials and share our knowledge.



During the seminar, we visited some of the important racial history sites where Black Americans fought and struggled. We visited the Rosa Park Library and museum, Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church, the Freedom Rides Museum, the Selma Brown Chapel of the African Methodist Episcopal church, the Edmund Pettus Bridge, the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail, and the Legacy Museum. At the end of the day, each group discussed what they

learned and shared their feelings and emotions.

Black history in the U.S. started in 1619. Over the period of about 150 years, millions of African people were kidnapped and put on ships, sold as slaves to the U.S. where they lived miserable lives. Even after the Civil War, between 1877 and 1950, about 4,000 people were killed by Ku Klux Klan lynchings. The African American people suffered abuses and massacres, but fought continuously for human rights.

Slavery was abolished with President Lincoln's emancipation of slaves in 1863, but racial discrimination continued. The economic situation for most African Americans continued to be a grave challenge. The Jim Crow laws in the South mandated segregation. Blacks struggled to find work and only the most menial jobs were available. With constant abuses and sacrifices, the struggles continued.

The Civil Rights movement began in 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, when Rosa Parks, a 42-year-old black woman, was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to white person. She is sometimes called the "Godmother of the Civil Rights movement". The Women's Political Council (WPC) organized a bus boycott that lasted 382 days. People walked, carpoled and only took taxis with black drivers.

The Supreme Court upheld a district court ruling (*Browder v. Gayle*) that racial segregation laws for buses were unconstitutional, and the bus boycott ended.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King who was serving as a Baptist minister in the church now known as Dexter Ave King Memorial church, became the de facto leader of the Civil Rights Movement. The movement received nationwide attention. Under King's leadership, many people participated in peaceful protests and fought for the Civil Rights Movement until King's assassination in 1968. We remember his famous "I have a dream" speech.

After this seminar, our view on black history and the Civil Rights movement has changed. We thought our status in the U.S. was because of being a model minority Asian, but we owe many African Americans for what we have now. President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act in 1964. We benefited from that, so we could come to the U.S. as immigrants. As we crossed the Selma Edmund Pettus Bridge singing "We Shall Overcome", our hearts were touched. The sacrifices and struggles of African Americans are continuing today.

At the Legacy Museum, we observed a touching image of a young daughter and father's farewell as he was being displaced. The daughter was in tears while being torn away from her father as chains

were wrapped around his neck and he was dragged away as a slave. I felt the pain and sorrow in their faces. What a tragedy!!!

In preparation for the seminar, I read the book, "Caste, the origins of our discontent" by Isabel Wilkerson. She talks about America's slave system, the caste system in India, and White Aryan supremacy in Hitler's Nazi Germany. All three systems had similar backgrounds and were perpetuated by people who wanted to keep the unfair system in place. "America today and throughout its history has been shaped by a hidden Caste System, a rigid hierarchy of human races, which is decided by Race, Class, and other facts" says I. Wilkerson.

Gum Moon Annual Luncheon

Supporting the Gum Moon organization, including their projects and services has long been a passion of mine. I served as a board member of Gum Moon Asian Women's Resource Center, retiring last year. I encourage you all to find out more about the history, current projects, and future of Gum Moon. [This video](#) about Gum Moon history explains how it came to be. "Gum Moon" translates into "Golden Door", meaning "a new beginning".

Gum Moon and Mary Elizabeth Inn are two of the mission projects endorsed by the national United Women in Faith. Both are located in San Francisco.

"Gum Moon Women's Residence and the Asian Women's Resource Center (AWRC) are projects Of the Methodist Church established to address the unmet needs of women and children in geographic and social transition. In providing a safe sanctuary to live in and programs that develop life skills. Gum Moon empowers these individuals, fostering stability, self-reliance, self-determination, and full access to opportunity."

Gum Moon is celebrating its 115th Anniversary this year. Gum Moon Asian Women's Resource Center (AWRC) held a fund-raising luncheon on September 16, 2023 at the Far East Café in San Francisco. The theme was "Women Making a Difference". There were three 2023 honorees:

- Outstanding Asian Woman Award – Mona Lisa Yuchengco
- Outstanding Community Service Award – Gerrye Wong
- Carol Lee Award – Katherine Kim



It was quite a surprise for me to receive the Carol Lee Award. Carol Lee was a former tenant of Gum Moon, and beneficiary of GM/AWRC. In honor of Carol Lee, one woman is recognized each year for her service to the organization. I also received a certificate of recognition from San Francisco Mayor

London Breed, Attorney General Brete Jenkins, City Attorney, Peter Chiu, and City Administrator Carmen Chu.



Katherine Kim

Debbie Ow, our El Camino Real District President, came to the luncheon, and celebrated with me along with my church friends and family members. It was a great honor to have all of them and it made one of the happiest days in my life even more special. This unexpected recognition of my life and work has made me realize that the work I've been doing is important, and so I will continue to do more community work as long as I can.

I thank God for the recognition, the honors and certificates. Thank you, to everyone who has supported me in this work



Annual Celebration – October 7th at Good Samaritan UMC

More than 40 people, including three pastors, attended the Annual Celebration for El Camino Real District of the United Women in Faith held on Oct. 7th. Good Samaritan UMC was the gracious host for the event and Trente Morant, Music Director at Good Samaritan UMC, led fabulous spiritual music to prepare the attendees for an attitude of grace. The Hymns were HUSH, GLORY, GLORY, Standin' in The Need of Prayer, and I'm So Glad.

The Scripture Reading was Philippians 2:1-5 - *Imitating Christ's Humility.*

Keynote speakers were from SURJ – Showing up for Racial Justice. Deb. St. Julien and Sigrid Jacoben were interviewed by Debbie Ow.

The offerings were accepted to support the ongoing relief efforts for the Pajaro area after the winter flood disaster. Collections totaled \$1,200.

The 5 Star Giving Award was made to the units: Campbell, Cupertino – Good Samaritan, Fijian, Gilroy, Los Altos, Marina, Salinas, San Jose – Cambrian Park, San Jose – Wesley, San Jose – Willow Glen, Santa Clara, Sunnyvale – 1st/Trinity, Sunnyvale Valley Faith, and Watsonville.

The following women were recognized for participating in the UWF 2023 Reading program: Almaden Hills - Julie Asada, Doris Warren, Bonnie Home; Asbury – Lorraine Magee; Campbell – Patty Henderson, Melinda Knepp, Darlene Dyer; Good Samaritan – Carolyn Bircher; Marina – Mary H. Adams; Salinas First – Karen Hall, Susan Landesman; Santa Clara – Lisa Hatchett, Dawn MacDonald; Sunnyvale – Eleanor Barskey, Linda Morse; Wesley– Beverly Acuna, Terri Koike; and Willow Glen – Barbara Brustrom, Ruth Granfors, Michelle Unger.

Mission Today award was presented at the Faith level to Good Samaritan, Watsonville, Willow Glen; at the Faith-Hope level to Los Gatos, St. Paul's, Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, Wesley; and at the Faith-Hope- Joy level to Campbell, Salinas First.

Our Saints who passed away during this year were remembered: Beverley Canon – Almaden Hills, Bennie Hahn – Good Samaritan, Chris Eplin – Marina, Annie Johnson and Sharon Forrest – Salinas First, Billie Jo Taylor (nee Overton) – St Paul's, Nancy Hellyer – San Jose First, Joann McGee, Ruth Riley, and Patricia Switzer – Sunnyvale.



Coming Events

January 4, 2024 - First UWF Community Gathering - Open to all “Welcome to the Practice of Communion.” Guest speaker Dr. Joyce Del Rosario, author and theologian. [Zoom Link](#)

January 13, 2024 - CalNv UWF Zoom Conference - “Power Up Transportation Solutions - Safe, Accessible, Sustainable” 9:30 - noon. [Registration information.](#)

February 3, 2024 - ECRD Zoom Connect and Learn - “Climate Change - You Can Be Part of the Solution,” 9:30 - noon, registration information will be available soon. Format has changed for this year, there will be individual Zoom meetings for officers, for example - Treasurer or Secretary. If you would like to participate in a Zoom meeting around Treasurer issues, please contact Carolyn Bircher at cmbircher@gmail.com. or Karen Hall for Secretary information at rolygog@sbcglobal.net

Around the District

If you have a photo or announcement about a local unit event, feel free to submit it. We will try to publish some things in this section that may trigger ideas for other units.

Marina United Women in Faith had their Annual Holiday Fair late in November. The overall successful event is the main fundraiser for the Marina unit. Crafts, gift items and baked goods are traditional fare. The success of a drawing for 6 gift baskets aided the success. The items in the baskets were donated from business and others, so the donations were all profit. Even with advertisements in social media and local papers, the major concern is how to widen advertising to attract more shoppers to the event



Good Tidings From Wesley UMC - Rounding Out 2023



One of the highlights of the year at Wesley UMC is Trunk 'N' Treats. Always held on Halloween, it is an opportunity to showcase our various church ministries to the local community and to provide a safe place for trick-or-treating. Nine trunks were represented, among them....the United Women in Faith. Our trunk was decorated with a sweet scarecrow, pumpkins, and a GIANT spider. A lot of fun was had and we were all blessed to have boatloads of candy and toys donated by our congregation. It is estimated that at least 600 children and families came through!

Our Sarah Circle is a small group of UWF who gather once a month via Zoom to discuss interesting books that help us grow spiritually. At the end of the year, we usually gather together and celebrate. In early December, 14 members and 5 church staff attended our holiday party which included a buffet lunch, games, and much laughter!

Wishing everyone around the El Camino District a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Peace, love and joy to you all!



Evergreen Valley UMC

The chapter of United Women in Faith at Evergreen Valley United Methodist Church had 2 events this year. We had a luncheon in June with 20 women in attendance. We were fortunate to have our Pastor and his wife join us. We had another luncheon in October to get to know 4 new members, with a total of 12 women. Both events were lively and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves.

Also, we did our annual donation to the Bill Wilson Center in San Jose, CA. This year we had 7 families from the Transitional Housing Program. We were able to make 3 quilts for the under-2-year-old girls while everyone else received a personalized pillowcase. Hand-knitted beanie caps were matched with the quilts and beanie caps (24) were sent for all the others. Additionally, we had enough cash donations to be able to provide each family with a \$100 gift card for Walmart.

Communications Update

As I wind up the final month of my term as Communications Coordinator, I wanted to express my thanks for allowing me to serve in the role. I have found myself spread pretty thin and I've been afraid I would drop some balls. Thankfully, Joyce Wilkinson and Leslie Fisk have risen to the challenge for 2024.

Joyce, Leslie and I have spent quite a few hours on Zoom, going over the various technologies. These ladies have been extremely committed to learning all of the pieces and parts involved in this role. I believe they will bring a fresh perspective and new ideas. and I feel confident they will do an excellent job.

I wish you all a blessed Christmas and a Healthy and Happy New Year.

Laurie Lindsey

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all who contributed to this newsletter. We want to thank Bonnie Home for her wonderful editing skills which she has so generously employed to assist me in preparation of the Mission Link Newsletter!

(Any misspelling, errors or typos are ours alone).

Joyce & Leslie